

GREENBELT, MD - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) was the keynote speaker today at the 43rd Robert H. Goddard Memorial Symposium luncheon sponsored by the American Astronautical Society, the premier independent scientific and technical group in the United States exclusively dedicated to the advancement of space science and exploration. Following the luncheon, Congressman Hoyer visited the Goddard Space Flight Center to tour the laboratory that is being used to build the Robotic Arm that was designed to service Hubble. Congressman Hoyer secured nearly \$300 million in federal funds last year to support a servicing mission to repair and upgrade the Hubble Space Telescope and sent a letter earlier this month to Acting NASA Administrator Frederick Gregory to ensure that the full amount is used to support this mission. Congressman Hoyer released the following statement following the tour at the Goddard Space Flight Center.

“I was very pleased to have the opportunity today to talk to the members of the American Astronautical Society. I am a big supporter of associations like this one whose mass influence, talent and intellect can be used cooperatively to inform both the public and private sector.

“As Time Magazine described Robert Goddard, ‘he launched the space age with a 10 foot rocket in a New England cabbage field.’ The dream of one man sparked the great achievements and advances in exploration that create our work and purpose today.

“I am grateful to all of the space professionals who remain committed to keeping Robert Goddard’s dream alive by dedicating themselves and their careers to the advancement of space exploration. Over the past several years, their efforts have stood firm in helping us on Capitol Hill prevent severe cuts in NASA funding and fight previous efforts to eliminate critical space programs.

“However, we have much work to do. Unfortunately, the fiscal policies this Administration is pursuing are creating funding challenges for us that are putting our efforts at risk.

“We are in a risky position of high deficits and huge long-term debt that will create more funding challenges for NASA and for the aerospace industry. Under this Administration’s watch, the federal government recorded the worst budget deficit in American history – \$412 billion – in Fiscal Year 2004. In less than 48 months, this majority has turned a projected ten-year budget surplus of \$5.6 trillion into a deficit of nearly \$4 trillion.

“Before Congress went on recess a little more than a week ago, the majority passed a budget resolution that would add \$2 trillion in debt over just five years. It would require deep cuts in Medicaid and grants for community and regional development. And, this means further cuts in critical funding for science and space exploration.

“The impact of this fiscal irresponsibility on space funding has become frighteningly clear. While the President’s Fiscal Year 2006 budget includes an increase in NASA funding to \$16.4 billion from \$16 billion in Fiscal Year 2005, the Administration provides no funds for a servicing mission to repair Hubble and rescinds the \$291 million that I helped secure and that the Congress appropriated for servicing Hubble.

“Since its launch in 1990, the Hubble Telescope’s state of the art technology has dramatically changed our understanding of the universe and produced thousands of extraordinary discoveries. Congress must make sure Hubble is adequately funded and supported.

“Earth science funding is held flat at \$5.4 billion, putting at risk NASA’s and Goddard’s roles as the leading science agencies that increase our scientific base of knowledge. I fear that as our fiscal situation worsens, the real advances and breakthroughs from space exploration, which keeps America at the forefront of discovery, will become harder to realize.

“Goddard is an outstanding facility – home to a unique number of resources and projects and a large number of talented scientists and engineers who make it work. This could not have been so without the support and discipline of a society that is dedicated to the advancement of space science.

“We will need the American Astronautical Society’s innovation and ingenuity to promote and protect the vital interests of NASA and space and technology industries in the years ahead. Working together, we can be stronger and better prepared to face future challenges that may confront NASA and the nation’s space industry.”

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